THE BUDGET (RAILWAYS) 1988-89 —Contd.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): Madam Deputy Chairperson, I rise to reply to a very stimulating discussion on the Railway Budget for this year. A number of very interesting and very substantial contributions were made by Members from all sides of the House. My dear friend, the tall and handsome Mr. Upendra...

DR. BAPU KALDATE (Maharashtra): Handsome!

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: ...as sual began by paying what seemed to be a compliment by talking about the charming smile. But as is his habit, soon that compliment turned out to be a very left-handed one. He is a very charming man and sometimes the sting in his punch takes you unawares. But fortunately because most of his arguments are based on wrong premises, they are fairly simple to refute. I am not trying to convert my compliment into a left-handed one. However, in spite of his facts being wrong in many cases, I acknowledge that because of his very deep basic understanding of railway working, his speech was, as usual, mentally very stimulating. Generally Members did make comments on the fare increase in both passenger and freight. It has been the objective of the Indian Railways to try and adopt a policy of tariff restraint. However, we do have to balance the long-term interests of the system. There has to be a certain amount of internal resource generation so as to fund a large plan and to become less dependent on the general exchequer and thereby try and lighten the burden and participate in the national exercise.

Madam Deputy Chairperson, there were three choices before us:

(a) Default on the estimated dividend payable of Rs. 736 crores;

(b) End with a deficit of Rs. 594 crores;

(c) Balance the Budget after absorbing in this particular case 30 per cent of the total input costs.

Madam, the first two options would have really meant resiling in our commitment to the national exchequer and merely passing the buck to my senior colleague, the Finance Minister by adding to the deficit in the national Budget and by shifting the responsibility of resource generation to that extent on to the shoulders of the Finance Ministry. I personally feel that this would not have been right for the morale of the railway team and for the general health and atmosphere and outlook and attitude of the railway staff. It would have meant shirking our responsibility to the nation.

On the other hand, adopting course (b), ending with a deficit Budget of Rs. 594 crores would have meant a similar reduction in our contribution to our own internal resource generation which would have led to a shrinking of the Plan.

So, Madam, we have chosen the harder and more difficult option because we believe in facing issues fairly and squarely and fulfilling our responsibility as crucial co-partners in the national exercise.

In tariff increases, through the years, freight has borne most of the burden. This is because we have kept in mind, and I should suppose that succeeding railway administrations have kept in mind, that in our country there is still no real alternative to the common man for long distance travel. Therefore, we have imposed a restraint to the extent possible. It would be relevant to mention here, as I have already said in my Budget speech, that we have not increased passenger fares in second class ordinary upto 50 km. in the last four years and beyond 50 km. too we increased it only three years ago. Madam, we have tried to keep the burden as light as possible on

this category of traveller. You would be interested to know that out of the total number of passengers who travel on the Indian railways, as many as 88 per cent travel in second class ordinary on which the increase has been for a minimum of 50 paise to a maximum for over 150 km. of Rs. 3. Similarly another 9 per cent travel in second class Mail and Express. We have tried to limit the increase to a minimum of Rs. 2 and over 750 kilometres to a maximum of Rs. 15. We have tried to keep the burden as light as possible over 97 per cent of the total number of passengers travelling on Indian Railways.

Similarly in monthly season tickets. Even after the proposed increase of Rs. 4 to Rs. 8 per season ticket per month, in terms of charging single journeys, it is estimated that with 24 to 25 working days, the commuter performs approximately 50 single journeys. After the hike in monthly season tickets of Rs. 4 to Rs. 8, he will still be paying only for eight to seventeen single journeys depending on the distances, whereas in actual fact on an average he will be performing something like 50 single journeys. The element of subsidy is still very very great.

The hon. Member, Mr. Upendra, had also talked about the freight increase leading to inflation. This is an accepted fact that increases in freight tariffs are more inflationary than increases in passenger tariff. But, as I said, maintaining a greater restraint on the increase in passenger traffic is important because of certain social obligations and objectives which have to be achieved. But even in the freight increase we have tried to keep the rural areas, the farmers and the weaker sections in mind. And, as the hon. Member knows, we have exempted fertilisers, foodgrains, pulses, salt, edible oils, jaggery, fodder and livestock from the freight increase. Now if you remove this from the 6 per cent hike—because these are the areas which are not going to be affected by the hike—the overall freight increase works out to nearly 4.8 per cent. In our Budget exercises we have tried to calculate what the direct and indirect impact would be on the wholesale price index. According to our calculations worked out by Finance Ministry standards and yardsticks, the direct impact of the freight increase on WPI works out to approximately only 0.10 per cent. And even taking the multiplier effect and the indirect effect because of rise in transport cost of commodities like coal and cement, the total impact on WPI approximately is 0.163 per cent, which is, I think, kept to a very reasonable and controllable figure. We have also tried to work out what, in our estimation, again according to the Finance Ministry yardsticks, would be the impact on certain items of daily consumption. To illustrate; the effect, on Charcoal has been estimated to be one paisa per kilogram, The effect on sugar, two paise per kilo, potatoes and onions also, two paise per kilo; kerosene 1.5 paise per litre; petrol, two paise per litre and on a fifty kilogram bag of cement it is estimated to have an impact of approximately 55 paise per bag. Needless to say, as I have mentioned in my Budget speech, that we have absorbed again in the area as much as 30 per cent of the input costs increase. So, as is obvious, an attempt has been made to keep the burden to the minimum.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE (West Bengal): What is the indirect cost of increase in passenger fares in the WPI? Is there any estimate?

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: We have not worked that out, but, as I mentioned, the main impact from the inflation aspect is by way of freight increase. So, when the freight increase is worked out to such a low figure as 0.1, one would assume that an indirect increase on passengers will work out to even less. However, this can also be calculated.

[Shri Madhavrao Scindia]

1.00 P.M.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: That has to be investigated Perhaps, you are talking of pre-independence days.

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: I am very much in 1988.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: Nowadays the administrative expenses of the Government of India are due to the rise in the consumer price index....

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: Madam, I think, it would also be pertinent to point out here because the point of operating ratio was raised by Mr. Birla, Mr. Upendra and Mr. Valiullah and I have explained this actually in my reply to the budget last year that operating ratio is a figure which has to be looked at very cautiously as it is very much dependent on certain weightages of priorities that you give to certain aspects of railway working. For instance, in pursuance of our social objective, all hon. Members know that we are indirectly subsidising passenger traffic to a great extent. It is estimated that we are indirectly cross-subsidising passenger traffic by freight-traffic to the extent of Rs. 1200 crores—essential commodities—and on un-economic branch lines another Rs. 500 crores. So approximately Rs. 1700 crores by way of social indirect subsidy we are giving. Now, if you start taking strictly a commercial view of railways as we have to fulfil our social objectives, we will have to continue giving a certain amount of subsidy keeping in mind the necessities.

SHRI RAOOF VALIULLAH (Gujarat): Madam the Minister is...

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: Let me complete. Don't break my trend of thought.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No interruptions, please. I am not allowing you.

SHRI RAOOF VALIULLAH: The Minister is talking about social objectives. Therefore, I am ....

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please sit down.

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: If I may resume, if you are, however, to analyse the railway working from a totally commercial point of view which is what is being done when you talk about operating ratio having gone up or having gone down, then, you must take into account and you must give credit for the Rs. 1700 crores, before coming to a decision on whether the railways are operating more efficiently or less efficiently.

Similarly, the depreciation reserve fund contribution is very significant in this regard. I would like to point out that in 1978-79 when my hon. friend was very much involved with the railways working, the provision for depreciation was Rs. 145 crores which worked out to 2.9 per cent of the capital at charge. In comparison the provision for depreciation in 1988-89 is Rs. 1500 crores which works out to 11.7 per cent. That means, it is four times what it was in 1978-79. Now, had I kept the provision for depreciation at 2.9 per cent as was done in 1977-78 which led to a lack of funds for the plan and led to a complete running down of the system over a period of time, the amount chargeable to working expenses on account of the allocation to depreciation fund would have been only Rs. 370 crores and not Rs. 1500 crores and the working expenses would have then gone down by Rs. 1130 crores. I would like Mr. Valiullah specially a Member of the ruling party to understand this that in the net if we had kept it to the 2.9 per cent depreciation as was done in the days of the Janata Party which led, as I said, to a long-term running down of the system, then, our operating ratio would have been as low a figure as 81 per cent. In spite of only a 2.9 per cent contribution, the

operating ratio in those days was 87.5 per cent. If you calculate our contribution as it would have been today at 2.9 per cent, then, we would have come down to 81 per cent much below what existed ten years ago. Similarly, Madam, tariff increases also do contribute to it. If there is no tariff restraint, we can shoot the prices up and certainly the operating ratio will improve. Thirdly, the operating ratio can also be improved, as I said, if we cut out indirect subsidies that are given. So if you look at the Railway system commercially and take credit for the indirect subsidies which you must do if you, as an economic analyst, a financial analyst, want to look at it from a commercial angle, you must give us credit for that, because a commercial enterprise would not have given an indirect subsidy as the burden and obligation of social objectives would not be performed. If you give us credit for that, the operating ratio comes down to as low as 77.3 per cent. I tried to explain this last year also and I have tried to explain it this year again. My knowledgeable friend, Mr. Upendra also talked about the surplus having gone down over the years. Again, Madam, these are effected by tariff restraints, by depreciation reserve fund contribution and by internal resource generation. In the Fifth Plan, in the years 1977 to 1979, the contribution on an average worked out to about 25 per cent internal resource generation contribution to the Railway plan. In 1987-88, we are contributing as much as 65 per cent. That is, we are becoming less and less of a burden on the general exchequer and if again I work out on the basis of depreciation reserve fund contribution of 2.9 per cent instead of 11 per cent as we are doing today, the surplus in 1977-78 was Rs. 126 crores. But if I calculate my surplus, in 1988-89 at the rate of 2.9 per cent contribution to depreciation reserve fund, it is not worked out as Rs. 28 crores. Hon. Members will be surprised to know that if I was to charge the same depreciation fund contribution as was done in 1977 to 1979, my surplus this year would have been worked out not to Rs. 28 crores but to Rs. 1158 crores. Now this is what I am trying to stress that basically, the long term interests of the system have to be kept in mind. A responsible Government cannot keep playing to the gallery. A responsible Government realises that unless the long-term interests of the system are safeguarded, short-term playing to the gallery will result in much greater danger to the same common man that you are trying to protect. It is his interests that have to be kept in mind when the Railways are contributing, constantly keeping in mind the long-term interests of the system because it is to his benefit that this will accrue.

Madam, Mr. Upendra had also talked about the percentage of net revenue to capital at charge coming down. I am dealing with it at length because some very interesting points had been raised by him. I feel, it is necessary to set the record straight and I am sure, I will convince the hon. Member also. I certainly do not infer that he was doing it out of any ill intention. His contribution has always been positive. But I think the record has to be set straight. I would like to explain to the House that a net revenue is a figure that is arrived at after deducting all expenses from the total receipts and before payment of dividend to the general revenues. Once again, the House will appreciate that this figure is similarly dependent on several factors like the productivity of system, increase in input cost, increase in fare and freight rates etc. Now, I come back again to the comparison with the years 1978-79. After taking into account the contributions to the depreciation reserve fund in those two years, the House will readily appreciate the position. In the years 1978-79, the contribution, as I said, was 2.9 per cent of the capital at charge: In comparison to this, this year it is 11.7 per cent.

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Had I kept the provision for depreciation at 2.9 per cent, the amount allocable to the depreciation reserve fund would have been only Rs. 370 crores and the net revenue which is budgeted at Rs. 764 crores now would have risen to Rs. 1894 crores. This works out to a higher ratio of net revenue to capital charge at 14.8 as compared to the ratio of 5.19 per cent recorded in 1978-79. So, it is very very easy to juggle figures at the expense of the common man's long-term interests. Madam, Mr. Upendra again made a very important point that some zonal railways were not contributing their mite and were making very large losses. I do not really have to explain to him because he is man who is well-versed in railway working. There are some railways which are passenger-oriented and we are cross-subsidising passenger traffic with the earnings of freight. Therefore, those railways like the North Eastern Railway and the Southern Railway which are passenger-oriented have to be cross-subsidised by the blue chip railways like the South Eastern Railway and the Western Railway. Various railways contribute to the railway working. I do not think it would be fair to condemn the North Eastern Railway and the Southern Railway because they are making a loss. They are fulfilling a major social objective which the Railways have adopted as one of their aims. He also mentioned that the profitability of the South Eastern Railway which is a blue chip railway had been going down. Madam, the profitability of the South-Eastern Railway in 1984-85 lays Rs. 144 crores; in 1985-86 it was Rs. 234 crores; in 1986-87 Rs. 232 crores and in 1987-88 Rs. 292 crores. So, it is also going up all the time. But again, a major impact on this profitability will be had by the tariff restraint that has been exercised in freight also. So, when you look at the railway working, I suggest that you look at the whole railway working and not zone-wise or segment-wise. It was mentioned by Mr. Upendra again that the POH over due was going up and the efficiency of the Indian Railways was not showing any improvement. He quoted several statistics and indices in support of his argument. I am taking the time of the House. I do feel that I must set the record straight because railwaymen have really worked hard and they have achieved many things and I think one must not detract from their performance. Madam, the most accurate efficiency indicator is the net ton-kilometre per wagon per day. In 1978-79 it was 976, in 1985-86 1296 and in 1986-87 it climbed to 1420. Similarly, he talked about the wagon turn-round. Now, you well know that it is also our attempt to increase lead to an optimum amount. The optimum is thought to be generally between 720 to 800 kilometres. Now if you increase lead, the wagon turn-round is bound to fall or it should have an adverse impact on the wagon turn-round. Madam, our lead has gone up from 693 in 1978-79 to 726 in 1986-87.. This should have an adverse impact on our wagon turn-round. But our wagon turn-round has also gone down from 14.5 in 1978-79 to 11.6 in 1986-87. So, not only have we increased lead but we have managed to more than absorb the adverse impact that lead has on wagon turn-round. Similarly, loco utilisation ft terms of thousand net tonne kms locomotive day, has gone up from 178 ten years ago to 191 now. On electric locos, the increase is from 168 to 242. This speed of goods train is a very relevant point. It is our attempt to try and improve it. In fact, this is one of the missions that the RDSO is going to adopt. But the speed of goods trains also depends very much on the amount of saturation in the system to which an increased pace of electrification, increased movement of goods traffc and increased pace of track renewal contributes because you have to give certain blocks and that impairs also the average time taken by the goods trains. Similarly, our goods trains now are hauling heavier loads. From 826, the net load of the goods trains has gone

up, in 1986-87 to 1,031. All these are contributing factors. But his point is well taken that it is important for us to concentrate on improving even more the speed of the goods trains. This is one of our objectives. Over due POH also has gone down considerably. In many cases, in diesel locos, for instance from 5.5 ten years ago it has gone down to 3.07 per cent and similarly, in the case of passenger coaches, in 1978-79, it was 12.26 per cent and, in 1985-86, it was 10.2 per cent and, in 1986-87 it was 5.86 per cent. Now, this is a definite improvement and wagons have also shown a similar improvement.

Oil consumption also was mentioned by him. In respect of oil consumption also,—I won't take more time of the House—there has been constant improvement. There has been constant improvement shown by the Railway organization in fuel consumption.

Madam, honourable Members, Mr. Sahu and Mr. Valiullah, quite rightly referred to the importance of track renewals. I have repeated this often. Our objectiv is, by 1995 to wipe out the entire backlog of approximately 20,000 kms. wich the new administration inherited three years ago. Our attempt is to on an average, renew approximately 4,000 kms. to 4,200 kms. of track. This would take into account 2,000 kms. of backlog and 2,300 kms of new arising for renewal so that in the next ten years that 20,000 kms. could be wiped out.

Mr. Sahu mentioned that our allocation to the rolling stock was quite low. Madam, this is an understandable misunderstanding on the part of the Member because, in our plan, the allocation is shown as only Rs. 525 crores whereas it does not take into account the Rs. 845 crores that is going to be contributed by the Indian Railway Finance Corporation as a result of which the total outlay works out to Rs. 1,370 crores which is about 40 per cent or well over 35 to 40 per cent of the total outlay. The allocation is very high because it comes very high in our priority.

Some honourable Members talked about railway electrification. I may mention here that in the years 1977 to 1979, 97 kms. of track was being electrified annually while this year we have electrified annually while this year we have electrified 670 kms. of track Railway electrification is also a priority in order to improve the railway working.

Shrimati Mahishi picked up a few points. She mentioned that 50 per cent of the funds being raised by the Indian Railways Finance Corporation are likely to be spent on staff and, therefore, in effect, it would be a wasteful expenditure from the investment angle. Madam, she is in deep confusion here. The IRFC funds are meant to fund our plans, they are not meant for revenue expenditure. Therefore, the IRFC funds are not really going to be spent on staff, but they are going to be spent, in fact, on capital investment on which some return is discernible because, after all, we pay at a rate of interest which is higher than the 6½ per cent that we pay to the national exchequer. Therefore, from the commercial angle we would like ourselves to be satisfied that we are earning at little more than that interest that we are paying to borrow these funds. I hope I have cleared her confusion.

Madam, I had mentioned in 1985 that the object of the Indian Railways is to give priority first, keeping in mind the constraint of resources, to modernization and rehabilitation only after which quite a meaningful expansion of the system can take place. Now, I have already gone through the points of rehabilitation and modernization. I would just like to mention, for the interest of the honourable Members, that under the directive of the Prime Minister, we have decided to identify the missions so that by the year 2000 AD, we will, in certain areas, not have to depend on importing of new technology, then adopting it in our production units and then starting production. On the other hand, in

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these certain identified areas, we would like, by the year 2000 AD, to be in a position to become the world leaders. The technology should be developed indigenously by us and other people then take US trail-blazers in those particular areas of technology. The Prime Minister is very keen that the Railways should start a move towards becoming leaders in certain areas of technology and from this year it self we have identified certain missions. We have identified a plan of approximately Rs. 280 crores which would be spent over the next decade and through this we will try and improve our testing facilities, our infrastructure, things liketest tracks, simulators, etc. and try and ensure that our objective is achieved through what we term as synergy that is, the amalgamation of the combined efforts of the Indian Railways, of industry which is related to the Indian Railways, which includes our own production units as well, and technical institutions, and I am happy to inform the House that already a Civil Engineering Group, combining the three aspects in synergy, has been set up and is working. Similarly, there is a Group on Signals and Telecommunications and a Group on the electrical aspects. In addition, the IIT Delhi and the University of Roorkee, beyond being involved with these three or four Groups, are already in touch with US and are examining further collaboration in various other areas. In other words, they have shown great interest in this. The missions that we have identified are to run 4,500-tonne trains at double the average of speed as of today. Mr. Upendra's point is well taken. Our missions then are o run 18,000-tonne heavy-haul trains at a maximum speed of 75 kms. per hour, to develop a technology by which passenger services could be run at a speed of 160 kms. per hour on mixed routes and at 200 kms. per hour on dedicated track. The fourth mission is to upgrade the Metre Gauge technology, tracks, locomotives etc. and the last is a feasibility report on whether we can take up very futuristic 'blue sky' areas. These are the five missions that have been identified. Some other points were raised again by the honourable Member, Shri Upendra. He is turning out to be my favourite in this particular reply. He talked of a number of ordinary trains having gone down during this period from 1981-82. In actual fact, they have gone up, on the Broad Gauge, from 1,602 to 1,682 and from 1,190 to 1,280 on the Metre Gauge.

Mrs. Mahishi talked about the West Coast line. My hon. colleagues in the other House Mr. Oscar Fernandez and Mr. Janardhan Poojary have also been greatly emphasising this particular line. I would like to inform the House that survey for the full line has already been submitted to the Planning Commission. We have recommended that we would like to commence work on the Mangalore-Udipi section. However, the clearance is still awaited.

Mr. Valiullah mentioned the Bhuj-Naliya line. I am happy to inform him that this particular line will be opened for goods traffic by 31st of March, 1988, i.e. in the next few days. In the next few months, we will also try to ensure that this line is opened for passenger traffic. We are treating it as a priority line.

Madam, the North-East was mentioned by Mr. Kamalendu Bhattacharjee who intervened very effectively and raised some very pertinent points. I would like to repeat that we are committed to complete four of the North-East times within the Seventh Plan period. The fifth line, the Amjuri-Tuli line, could also have been completed. But there is land dispute between the State Governments which has to be resolved. Therefore, it is beyond our control. It may not be possible to complete it in the Seventh Plan. I can assure the House that the moment the land dispute is resolved

and the land is given to us, we will process it and work on it as speedily as on the other four lines.

The hon. Members know that work will be commenced on the Brahamputra Bridge, the Jogigopa Bridge. We are wanting it to become, from the bridge technology point of view, one of the most modern bridges from the engineering angle.

SHRI DHARANIDHAR BASUMATARI (Assam): Madam, it is a bridge of which foundation stone was laid down by Mrs. Gandhi, our great leader. I want to know from Hon. Minister how long it will take to complete the bridge over Brahamputra.

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: I cannot give the actual time-schedule on it. The hon. Member well knows that Brahamputra is a very very difficult river to work on. We have just completed the road bridge at Tejpur under very very difficult circumstances. The engineers of the Railways who worked on that bridge have completed it in record time and before the target date. All I can say is that it will be our endeavour to do a similar exercise on the Jogigopa bridge. However, it also depends on the resources available. It is approximately a Rs. 230 crore bridge, if I remember rightly, of which Rs. 60 to 70 crores will be given probably by the Surface Transport Department. It will be our effort to complete it within the shortest possible time keeping in mind, of course, the fact that it should be funded properly and that there should be no shortage of resources in future. Brahamaputra allows you to work for hardly two to three months in a year. You cannot work more than two to three months in a year because of the very strong currents. It is because of certain geological formations on the river bed that we have to go in for the most modern cable stay technology on a large section of the bridge which itself requires great technical examination. But once this cable stayed bridge is in position, it will represent, as I said, a new stride in bridge technology in our country.

Madam, Karur-Dindigal line will be ready by September, 1988. Mr. Kalp Nath Rai talked about Varanasi-Bhatni conversion. He has supported the railway budget in a very very impressive manner and in a very strong manner. I thank him for it. The allocation to Varanasi-Bhatni line comprises 14 per cent of the total plan allocation for gauge conversion in the entire country. I would also like to mention that the Bangalore-Mysore conversion has been allotted 11 per cent of the total budget for the country. If you add to that Guntur-Machrela, it means that 50 per cent of the budget for conversion has gone to the two States of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

Madam, I want to mention a few of the services that we are restoring and some of the services that we are going to start: The introduction of a superfast between Dadar and Madras on five days in a week, in lieu of the present Bombay-Madras express. Restoration of Kanchenjunga Express on all the days of the week and its extension to and from Guwahati as demanded by Shri D.P. Roy and Shri Kamalendu Bhattacharjee. The introduction of a weekly express between Jammu Tawi and Kanyakumari which ws insisted upon by Shri Ghulam Rasool Matto, and a bi-weekly express between Jammu Tawi and Madras in lieu of the present 17/18 Madras-Jammu Tawi tri-weekly Janata Express. Introduction of a superfast service between Vishakhapatnam and New Delhi on four days in a week and the introduction of a link express between Vijayawada and Vishakhapatnam in lieu of the present bi-weekly arrangement. And, as announced in my Budget speech, Sambalpur-Bhubaneswar express will be introduced but as a daily overnight

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service. The present 17/18 link express will continue to run. A number of trains have been announced to serve the tribal region of Sarguja, which I have already announced in the Lok Sabha. The introduction of an Express train between Bhopal and Rajkot, which my friends Mr. Suresh Pachouri and Mr. Thakur had been insisting upon, in lieu of the present Bhopal-Baroda Passenger. This will go via Ahmedabad. And the introduction of an express train between Bombay and Pune. As announced earlier a new superfast train is to run between Bombay and Varanasi. It has now been decided that in order to serve the people of Pune and Surat two-three coaches each from these places will be attached to the train at Bhusaval. It is also proposed that once a week a train will run between Bombay and Faizabad via Sultanpur. These are the various trains that we are introducing.

Mr. Upendra had also talked about level crossing accidents. Level crossing accidents have been actually coming down from 93 in 1977-78 to 65 in 1986-87. A number of these accidents take place due to the callousness and negligence of the road user, but I would like to inform the Hon. House that while on the Indian railways level crossing accidents, both manned and unmanned, is 65, in Japan, which is supposed to be a very high technology area, the number is 651, in West Germany the number is 255, in Franch 318 and in the USA 6562. We are not, however, deriving any satisfaction out of it, 65 accidents is 65 accidents and we must try and improve upon them.

Madam, whatever improvements have been brought about the railway sytem are entirely due to the team effort put in by the entire railway family. I am happy to inform the House that this atmosphere prevails even today. We are working like one body towards the achievement of our goal through our effort to contribute in the exercise of national reconstruction. Madam, there is a sanskrit sloka which describes the dilemma facing a middle-agaed man while selecting the right man for his daughter. The girl herself would like to have as her husband a man young, handsome and tall. The girl's mother, however, would like her son-in-law to be someone who has a big house, car and a number of servants and all other things which make life comfortable. The father, on the other hand, would like in the bridegroom an intelligent person, a man of dignity, enjoying prestige and reputation. The near relations would prefer to have as their brother-in-law a very influential person who can set them on a good lucrative career. And as far as the invitees are concerned, they could not careless. They are not at all bothered about what type of man the bridegroom might be. Their sole interest is the food which is served and in how many courses and in how many varieties. Madam, while framing the budget one is faced in many ways by similar dilemma. It is difficult to find a combination that pleases all. But it has been our effort in this budget to strike the right balance so as to through improved efficiency increase the level of satisfaction of the rail user and at the same time safeguard the long-term interest of the Indian Railway System. I am confident that with the continued cooperation that we have been receiving, the advice and understanding from all hon. Members, the Indian Railway System will in the future even achieve greater heights. Thank you very much.

SHRI RAOOF VALIULLAH: There is a controversy raging in this country that Railways have demanded a sub-system for telecom network and the P&T department which according to them is not dependable had been objecting to this. I want to

know whether the Railways have given clearance from the Government to import the sub-system.

SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA (Andhra Pradesh): Let the Minister reduce reservation charges for the second-class and also the rates of the platform ticket.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The House stands adjourned for lunch till 2.40 p.m.

The House then adjourned for lunch at thirty-seven minutes past one of the clock.

The House reassembled after lunch at forty-two minutes past two of the clock, **The Vice-Chairman (Dr. Bapu Kaldate)** in the Chair.

THE BUDGET (PUNJAB) 1988-89.

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI NARAYAN DATT TIWARI): Sir, I lay on the Table a Statement (in English and Hindi) of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of Punjab for the year 1988-89.

SUPPLEMENTARY DEMANDS FOR GRANTS (PUNJAB), 1987-88

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI NARAYAN DATT TIWARI): Sir, I lay on the Table a Statement (in English and Hindi) showing the Supplementary Demands for Grants for Expenditure of the Government of Punjab for the year 1987-88.

THE BUDGET (GENERAL), 1988-89— GENERAL DISCUSSION

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE (West Bengal): Sir, I will crave more indulgence than normally is given to me because this is my pre-retirement budget speech. (Interruptions). No, no, it is just a simple budget speech. This budget, let me begin with the statement, is one more reason why the Government should go. Added to the political and social reasons the economic reasons have been provided in this budget. Now there were some comments on the budget that it is a superficial thing. I for one don't consider Tiwariji a superficial person, but he has problem having to attend to some superficial guidelines and a superficial guide. I believe that he is a person of depth. In my comments, I will explore the depths. Sir, in his Budget speech, he has made a few claims. And one of the claims relates to excellent management of the drought. That is para 5. As it behoves the ruling party Members, they compare themselves with the Janata period. Unfortunately, Sir, Tiwariji's ground has been taken away by his own Department's Annual Survey. Tiwariji's claim is that despite a severe drought, the prices have only risen upto 10 per cent, while in 1979-80, the situation was that the prices rose by 21 per cent. I am not talking of the comparison with Janata period; I am questioning the claim itself. The Annual Survey, unfortunately, mentions that the reason why prices rose is related to the second oil shock, but before that the fact is that agricultural production in that year fell by 16 per cent a negative 4 per production also was a negative 4 per cent. In this year the agricultural production, according to all statements, has fallen by 7 to 10 per cent, not 16 per cent, and the claim which I will examine a little later is that the industrial growth rate is about 8 per cent.

Now I am surprised at the claim that if agricultural production has not fallen, as much as in 1979-80, if